

MARCEL DUCHAMP AND CATALONIA



MARCEL DUCHAMP, SCULPTURE-MORTE

SOME OF DUCHAMP'S LATER WORKS WERE PRODUCED IN CADAQUÉS. FROM 1959 WE HAVE "WITH MY TONGUE IN MY CHEEK", "TORTURE-MORTE" AND "SCULPTURE-MORTE". THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL MONTAGE "ÉTANT DONNÉS", INSTALLED AT THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART (USA), ALSO HAS MANY LINKS WITH CADAQUÉS.

In 1912, the Catalan art dealer and gallery owner Josep Dalmau organised an exhibition of Cubist Art in the Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona. It was the fifth international exhibition of official cubism –coinciding with the one in Paris–, the second to take place outside of Paris and the first to be held in a private gallery.

The exhibition was the occasion for the presentation in Barcelona of Marcel Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier*, No.2, which the following year formed part of the Armory Show in New York and brought the artist international acclaim. This was probably the first contact between Duchamp's work and Catalonia. But the most personal and intimate link was formed in Cadaqués. In the summer of 1933 Duchamp visited this village on the Catalan coast with Mary Reynolds. The summers he spent at Cadaqués were the counterpoint to his visits to Paris and New York. In Paris he saw a lot of Salvador Dalí and Gala and often invited friends like Man Ray to stay.

As Joan Josep Tharrats says in *Cent anys de pintura a Cadaqués* (Barcelona 1981), "In Cadaqués Marcel Duchamp was a man open to everybody. He took part in discussions at the Casino. He went to the openings of all the exhibitions of painting, without distinction, and he was enormously fond of the traditional songs and dances: the music of the *havaneres* in the square and even flamenco".



MARCEL DUCHAMP. TORTURE-MORTE

Some of Duchamp's later works were produced in Cadaqués. From 1959 we have *With my Tongue in my Cheek*, *Torture-morte* and *Sculpture-morte*.

With my Tongue in my Cheek is a small pencil drawing (25 x 15 cm) mounted on wood, showing a self-portrait in profile with a plaster cheek superimposed in the appropriate position. This is an ironic, light-hearted work which plays with words and expressions and their meanings, something the artist was very fond of.

Torture-morte is a plaster cast of the sole of a foot mounted on wood. On the flesh-coloured sole are thirteen flies.

This is another mocking view of the subject of realism and the traditional still life.

Sculpture-morte is a small montage, a kind of head made up of fruits, vegetables and insects in the style of Arcimboldi. But apart from its antinaturalist irony, this work, like the previous one, is overlaid with further distorted readings. The fruits are real marzipan cakes like the ones we make and eat in Catalonia to celebrate the coming of the three Wise Men.

The complex installation or montage *Étant donnés*: 1) *La chute d'eau*, 2) *Le gaz d'éclairage*, which Duchamp constructed between 1946 and 1966, also has many links with Cadaqués. The montage is made from a range of materials: an old wooden door, bricks, leather stretched over a metal frame, branches, aluminium, bits of iron, glass, cotton wool, electric and gas lights, motors, etc. The overall dimensions are 242.5 x 177.8 x 124.5 cm.

The final installation of this work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA) gives us an idea of the effect the artist was after. Duchamp left detailed instructions as to how the work was to be exhibited. Once inside the museum, after looking at other works by Duchamp, the visitor goes into a dimly lit empty room. At the back, framed by bricks, can be seen a weathered old wooden door. When we approach the door and look at it closely we see that there are two peepholes at eye level which are an



MARCEL DUCHAMP, ÉTANT DONNÉS

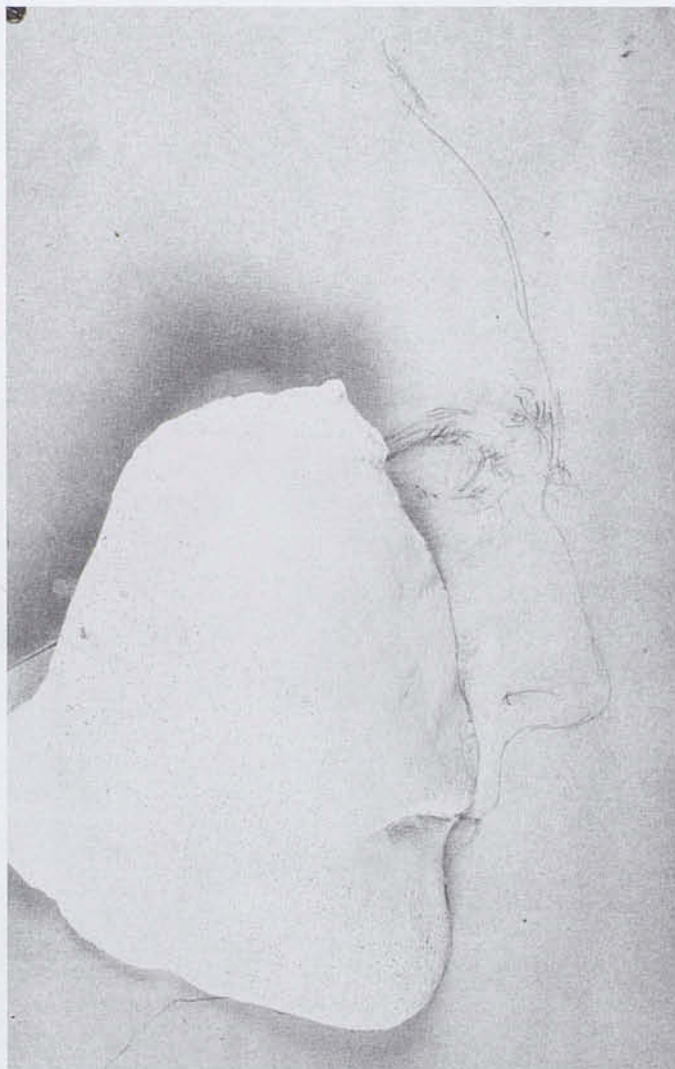
invitation to the curious to look and see what there is inside.

If we look, we see in the foreground a brick wall with an irregularly shaped hole in it. Through this hole we get an incomplete view of a naked woman with her legs open towards the spectator, blatantly showing off her genitals which have no pubic hair. The woman's body is resting on a bed of dry branches and in her left hand (the only one visible) she is holding a lamp. In the background can be seen a landscape with a waterfall which is constantly flowing

thanks to a simple but ingenious mechanism behind it.

Étant donnés, as Juan Antonio Ramírez explains in his excellent book *Duchamp. El amor y la muerte, incluso* (Madrid 1993), is made up of three separate sections linked by the gaze of the "voyeur", as the spectator is referred to in the instruction manual that accompanies the work. There is the snooper's room, the brick wall room and the room with the nude. "Duchamp, who spent most of his life slandering retinal art, exceeded all the lim-

its of visual illusionism here. The door is authentic (it was taken to New York from Cadaqués) and anyone looking through the two peepholes gets the feeling he is looking at a fragment, possibly frozen, of reality. This radical inversion of the aesthetic principles that governed the work of *The Great Glass* has the support, however, of an invisible but complex architectural and technical structure." Because what one sees is merely an illusion that conceals the cunning truth of the trick and the staging. A series of photographs by Denise



MARCEL DUCHAMP. WITH MY TONGUE IN MY CHEEK

Brown Hare on the installation *Étant donnés*—reproduced in the catalogue for the exhibition on Duchamp at the Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona in 1984—not only confirms that the main door of the montage came from Cadaqués, but that the landscape in the background is also very probably from the same area. One of these photographs shows Alexina Duchamp before the door in question in its original place before being moved and manipulated. Another photograph from the same series shows Duchamp and Teeny eating at a table be-

fore a waterfall like the one in the landscape forming the background to the montage. Although this is Duchamp's last large montage, it does not seem to be his last work. Tharrats remembers that "Marcel Duchamp arrived in Cadaqués for the last time on 12 June 1968. That summer he started to work on a project for a fireplace he intended to build in his home. He called the drawing *Cheminée anaglyphe*". Duchamp had always taken an interest in three-dimensional techniques, using either stereoscopes or anaglyphs, so it's

hardly surprising that this last incomplete work—also produced in Cadaqués—should have centred on this subject. This is also the last documented item in the *catalogue raisonné L'Oeuvre de Marcel Duchamp* published by the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris in 1977.

Tharrats says, "Duchamp left Cadaqués in September for Neuilly-sur-Seine. A few days later he died suddenly. The Cadaqués project for the fireplace was his last work. The artist was then 81 years old". ■